

Submitter: Ateusa Salemi  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Labor and Workplace Standards  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916

I urge lawmakers to pass Senate Bill 916 to support striking workers in Oregon.

As a Nurse, and the daughter of a nurse, and the granddaughter of a machinist, I KNOW that workers only have a voice when they come together. As a nurse in Oregon today, I have watched as my fellow nurses have had fight after fight with their employers, coming down to historical strikes against Providence, Kaiser, Legacy. Providers have even begun joining unions because of their need for a shared voice against these healthcare corporations. And unfortunately, these employers, they are huge corporations. They no longer prioritize patient care, outcomes, or it appears the well being or limitations of their own workers. Nurses were at negotiation tables for months and months and months before they ever walked a picket line. What were they asking for? Safer staffing, more investment in them as humans so that they can take care of their patients. As I said, I AM A NURSE. I do what I do to make a living, but also so that I can take of people, of my neighbors, of my community. I have an obligation to put patients first, to ensure their safety and well being. My employer should put me first, making sure that I have the tools that I need to do my job. When they delay at the table, knowing that with M/BILLIONS of dollars in reserve they can wait out workers who are often one or two paychecks away from being unable to feed their families. Giving striking workers the ability to collect UI will help workers level the playing field and enable them to continue to put their patients first and take care of themselves in the process. Nurses don't make these decisions lightly, and as one picketers sign said during the Providence strike, "When the doctors and nurses are outside, there's something really wrong inside."

Workers strike only after every other option has been exhausted. In many cases, they continue working under expired contracts for months or years, making sacrifices because they care about their jobs. SB 916 is a simple, fair measure to ensure that when workers must strike, they don't face total financial devastation.

Employers often use healthcare benefits as a weapon in labor disputes. Cutting off healthcare during a strike puts workers and their families in an impossible situation. Unemployment benefits are a reasonable safeguard that will prevent workers from falling into crisis while they stand up for fair wages and conditions.

This bill is low-cost, does not significantly impact employers, and would result in shorter strikes and fairer contracts. Oregon should pass SB 916 and support its

workers.